

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-16, 18-26, 28-36 and 38-43 are pending. By this Response, claims 1, 3, 4, 16, 18, 26, 28 and 36 are amended and claims 2, 17, 27 and 37 are cancelled. Reconsideration and allowance based on the above-amendments and following remarks are respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the indication of claims 2-4, 8, 9, 17, 18, 21, 27, 28, 31, 37 and 40 as being allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 5-7, 10-16, 19, 20, 22-26, 29, 30, 32-36, 38, 39 and 41-43 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Elliot (U.S. patent 6,587,470) in view of Ikawa (U.S. Patent No. 6,614,753). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 16, 26 and 36 to include the features of allowable dependent claims 2, 17, 27 and 37, respectively. Therefore, as amended, the claims are now allowable. Dependent claims 3-15, 18-25, 28-35 and 38-43 are also allowable as being dependent upon an allowable claim.

Thus, applicants respectfully submit that the rejection is now moot. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

Conclusion

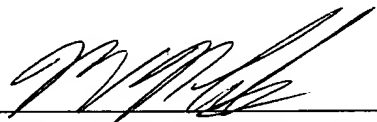
Applicants respectfully submit that the application is now in condition for allowance. Prompt allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Chad J. Billings (Reg. No. 48,917) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By   
Michael R. Cammarata, #39,491

MRC/CJB:cb  
4450-0218P

P.O. Box 747  
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747  
(703) 205-8000

Attachment(s)